

You Can Have a Personal Pentecost

✖ The word *Pentecost* has special meaning for more than 500 million Christian believers worldwide. They not only joyfully tell the story of Acts 2 (called by some “the most-read chapter in the Bible”); they also experience the Holy Spirit just as the early disciples did.

Fifty days after Jesus’ crucifixion, on the annual Jewish festival of Pentecost in Jerusalem, God launched the church of Jesus Christ with a mighty outpouring of His Holy Spirit. Here’s how the Bible describes the event:

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

This marvelous personal encounter is known as “the baptism with the Holy Spirit,” and it is accompanied by the miracle of “speaking in tongues.” It wasn’t for the disciples alone; you too can have this experience—your very own

Pentecost.

Before the feast of Pentecost, Jesus' disciples had been praying in Jerusalem for 10 days. They realized their situation was tenuous because Jesus had been crucified there a month and a half before. However, they also remembered that, on the night before He died, Jesus had announced His departure and promised to send them the Holy Spirit as His replacement.

Forty days later (10 days before the day of Pentecost), the resurrected Jesus appeared for the last time and affirmed His pledge. "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" (Acts 1:4-5). Then they watched, dumbfounded, as He physically ascended into the heavens.

Pentecost Then and Now

As the small band of Galileans continued their prayer vigil "continually in the temple praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:53), a great tide of festive, boisterous pilgrims pressed into the swollen city, happy to meet with friends and worship at the glorious hub of Hebrew religion. Thousands began gathering into the courtyards of the great Temple, a massive structure that could accommodate 210,000 persons. Early Pentecost morning, 120

disciples were already
praying in Solomon's Porch (or possibly the Court of the
Women).

Suddenly three miracles commanded attention. The Spirit
arrived—accompanied
by a howling wind, a blazing fire and miraculous tongues.

Imagine a wind of hurricane proportions, heard but not felt.
“Suddenly” means
that God was moving and nothing could stop Him. The ruah, the
“breath” of God
promised by Jesus, had arrived (see John 3:8; Ezek. 37).

With it came a sheet of fire that descended over the
disciples. Quickly the
fiery mass divided into small flames that danced through the
air, coming to rest
on the head of each one of the 120 followers of Jesus. This
was not literal
fire, but “as of” or “like” fire, meaning it was absolutely
real but also
uniquely divine.

The third miracle was an explosion of sound. The unscholarly
Galileans began
speaking in more than a dozen known languages—although they
had not learned
them—as if they were expert linguists. This was the first
manifestation of
“speaking in tongues,” the phenomenon that Jesus said would
occur among His
followers.

The disciples were not preaching in tongues but rather
offering prophetic
worship. The people said, “‘We hear them speaking in our own
tongues the

wonderful works of God'" (Acts 2:11). These worship acclamations not only glorified God but also softened hearts for Peter's subsequent message (like a plow breaking up hard ground).

After the ruckus had somewhat subsided, Peter began to preach the good news of Christ to the gathered crowd (probably in Aramaic, the common language).

Midway into his sermon, he proclaimed a classic Christian concept in simple

1-2-3 style: "'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus

Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy

Spirit'" (Acts 2:38). Peter also had words for our generation:

"'For the promise

is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off [the Gentiles], as

many as the Lord our God will call'" (v. 39).

The pattern Peter laid out in his message is a solid foundation for incorporation into the body of Christ:

1. Be born again by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Be water baptized.

3. Be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Each of these three phases has a vital objective, and the Holy Spirit is very

much involved in each. Taken together as a whole they make up the introductory

essentials for serving the Lord: salvation, sanctification and equipping for

service. It is the last phase that is our current focus.

The wonderful experience of Spirit baptism is for those who already have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. Conversion is, without a doubt, accomplished by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit; but the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a distinct infilling or empowering for service that is subsequent to conversion.

The word "baptism" refers to immersion and is best illustrated by what happens when a person is water baptized by dunking. "Spirit baptism" means that a person is engulfed by, immersed in and filled with the Holy Spirit—like an empty glass plunged into a tub of water.

Spirit baptism is a meaningful encounter with Christ that bonds the believer to the same Spirit, experience and church that was birthed at Pentecost—and helps him relate more deeply with Christ Himself. It accomplishes seven things in his life: It makes Jesus more real, increases his spiritual sensitivity, illuminates the Scriptures, provides the capability of praying "in the Spirit," brings sanctification, and allows for dynamic testimony and spiritual gift manifestation.